

Colin Greenly



Lettering and border inspired by *The Corcoran Art Journal* 1893-1894.

Gift of

Mrs. Walter S. Salant

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Colin Greenly

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The Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.

Preface

This exhibition of the recent work of Colin Greenly is one of a series of one-man presentations devoted to the work of significant living American artists. We wish to thank the artist's New York dealer, Bertha Schaefer, for her cooperation and for early recognition of the artist. In addition, we wish to thank Mr. Robert Crozier, New York, and Mrs. Henrietta Ehram of the Henri Gallery, Washington, for lending essential works to the exhibition. The artist wishes to record his appreciation of the cooperation of Mr. T. J. Sullivan of Extruded Aluminum Co. of Summerville, Georgia, for producing the necessary special dies and aluminum extrusions, and Mr. Charles Drnek of Custom Extruders, Farmingdale, Long Island, for the design and manufacture of the vinyl extrusions. He also wishes to thank Mr. Larry Sullivan for technical advice on acrylics.

The Assistant Director, James Harithas, was responsible for the organization and installation of the exhibition.

Hermann Warner Williams, Jr.
Director

Introduction

This exhibition presents selections from the last four years of Colin Greenly's sculpture and drawings. It begins with a 1964-65 series of acrylic forms now identified as supercircles, from which the polystyrene, straight-line sculptures then evolved. The exhibition surveys the embossed drawings of the period and concludes with the glass works executed in 1967.

The supercircle provided a new aesthetic foundation for Greenly's sculpture which was based on the primacy of its shape and which infused the subsequent work with new meaning. It is of interest that a parallel development in science may be cited. In September 1965, *Scientific American* published previously unknown, or at least unused, geometric configurations called the supercircle and superellipse which Piet Hein, Danish mathematician, writer and inventor, arrived at through mathematical computation and computer research.* Hein's work based on the supercircle, the precise form between the circle and the square, was hailed as a major achievement by scientists and architects. More than a year earlier, Greenly, unaware of Hein's calculations and working in almost complete obscurity in McLean, Virginia, developed similar configurations as an outcome of experiments with organic shapes made during the period 1961-64.

Although Greenly arrived at his supercircle through a visual and intuitive process, he did so with incredible mathematical precision. In spite of the fact that Greenly's forms are hand-cut, one of his supercircles shows no more variance than .004 of an inch of Hein's formulation.

The supercircle, which the artist refers to as a primary transition symbol, provided Greenly with a universal denominator, one which integrated curved and straight-line forms and which brought together in a clearly defined form all of his earlier attempts to make an art which reflected nature's basic structure and which made visible the process by which a natural form became itself. Because the supercircle integrated a square and a circle simultaneously in transition towards each other, it symbolized nature's permanent state of flux. In the same shape, one finds a stable, measurable form and, at the same time, one that is in transition. Greenly himself describes the process as "extending the

* Martin Gardner, "Mathematical Games," *Scientific American* (September, 1965), Vol. 213, pp. 222-236.

periphery of a square to a point where the resultant shape becomes transition — a symbol of becoming.”

With the supercircle as his primary form, Greenly made use of concepts with which he had long been experimenting. To create a compact sculptural unit, he organized progressions of superimposed forms in parallel planes, keeping each form separated from the next by a narrow open space. Thus, the work assumed a life of its own through subtle and gradual changes of light, reflected in between and on each form. This effect emphasized the transitional quality of the shape. This use of light appeared in his work as early as 1961 in a series of relief paintings and was continued in the polystyrene pieces of the next period of his work. Initially the works were either entirely white, although, the artist points out, not white alone, as the reflected light breaks down into various colors — or wholly black. In other sculptures of the same type, Greenly chose to experiment with other colors, thickness, and size, before abandoning the supercircle.

The white embossed drawings are a reflection of Greenly's sensitivity to the essential quality of materials. No two-dimensional format could more clearly parallel his sculpture since, in effect, it is the subtle changes of light acting on the raised edges which activate these drawings. In these drawings, Greenly either experiments with new configurations or recreates forms which have already been used in his sculpture.

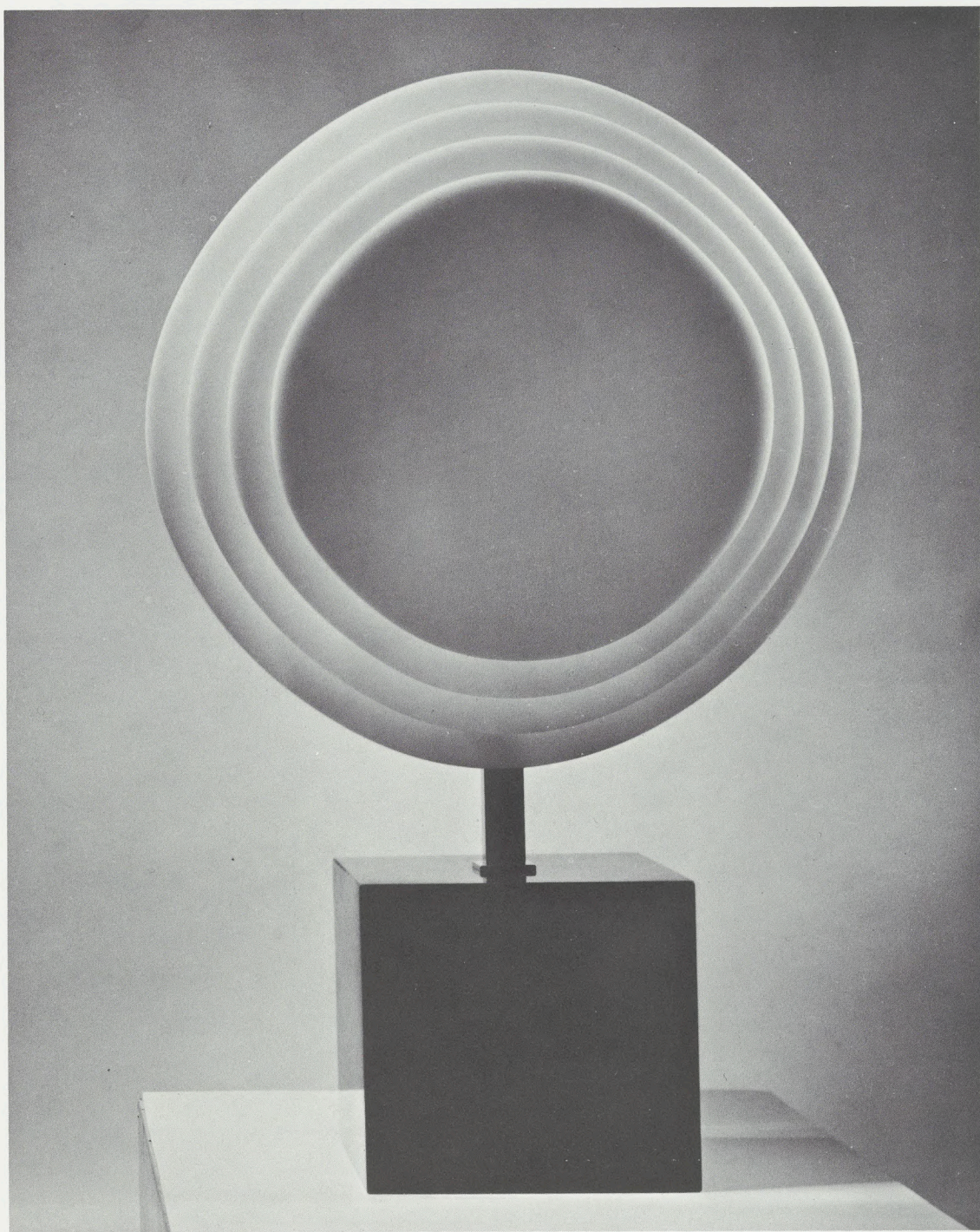
In the straight-line polystyrene works, Greenly proceeded to create forms which were more stable than the preceding supercircles. These compact sculptures are, nevertheless, connected to the supercircles, for they evolve from them as logically as 1 follows 0 in our own mathematical system. Working with a light-weight material, polystyrene, afforded Greenly the opportunity to work in greater scale and to experiment with much more complex arrangements of form. In these works, as in the acrylic pieces, the artist assembled each work as a unified series of spaced, light-reflecting progressions. To reduce the presence of the material which is manufactured in porous blue sheets, he carefully filled, sanded, and painted each piece white. These works not only reflect the greater confidence of the artist, enabling him to work with several new shapes but they also signal his ability to apply his previous experience to a range of new problems. The polystyrene works led directly to the glass pieces which consist of more varied and open architectural forms.

The most recent works employ sheets of clear glass joined together by a system of aluminum joints and extrusions which the artist designed for the sculpture. The works are

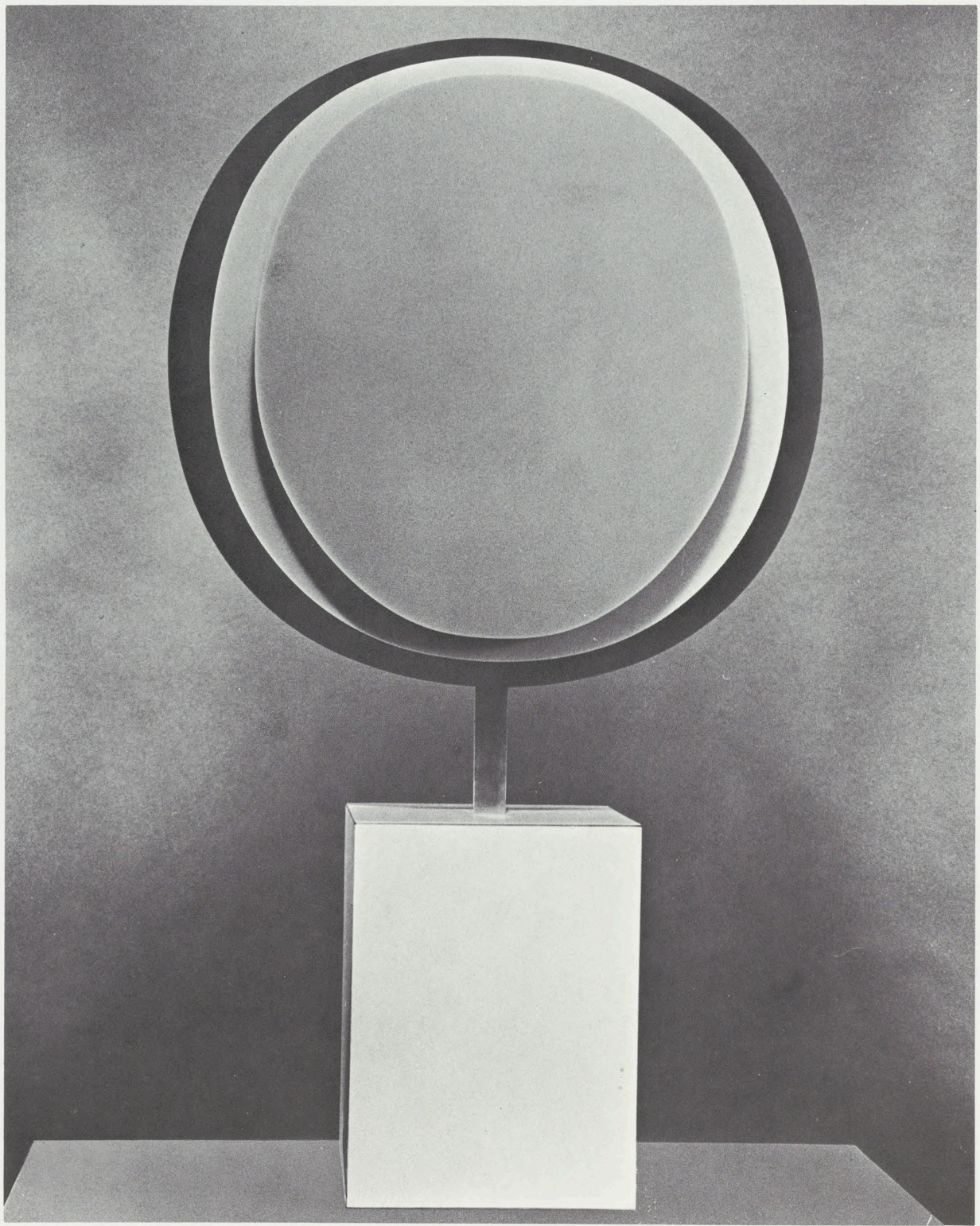
environmental; they are also almost immaterial due to the transparency of the clear glass. Their unity of form is achieved by the linear system of extrusions which define the edges of each form and through careful organization of their rectangular and/or triangular elements — some of which support and/or contain similarly shaped forms. In these works, one is faced with a complex of both real and illusionary forms which may be considered either separately or jointly. Each sculpture reflects elements of itself within and beyond its tangible perimeter — forms appear and disappear, often with unsettling clarity. In these works, with considerable imagination, Greenly has achieved in visual terms a reification of real and illusionary experience.

James Harithas
Assistant Director

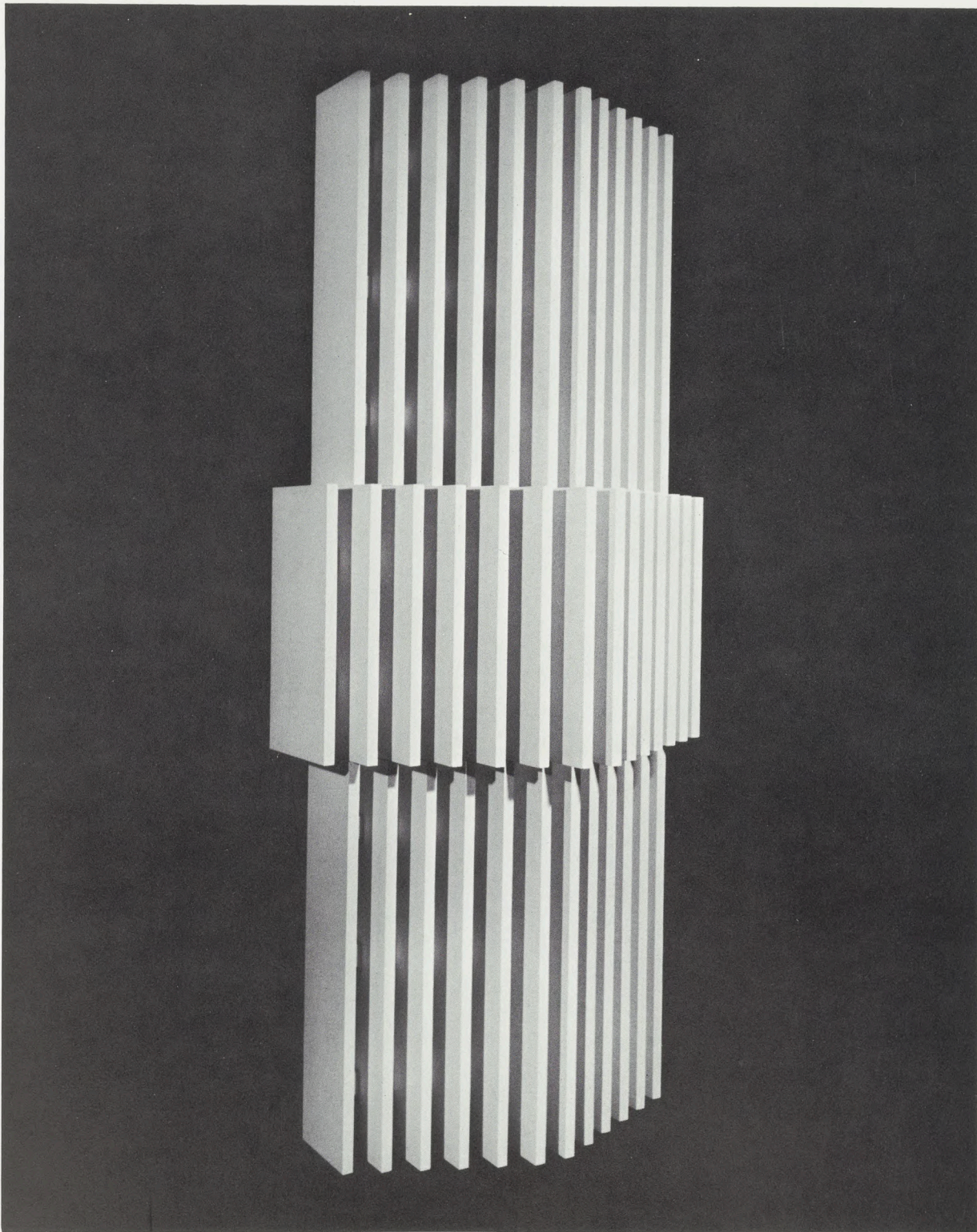




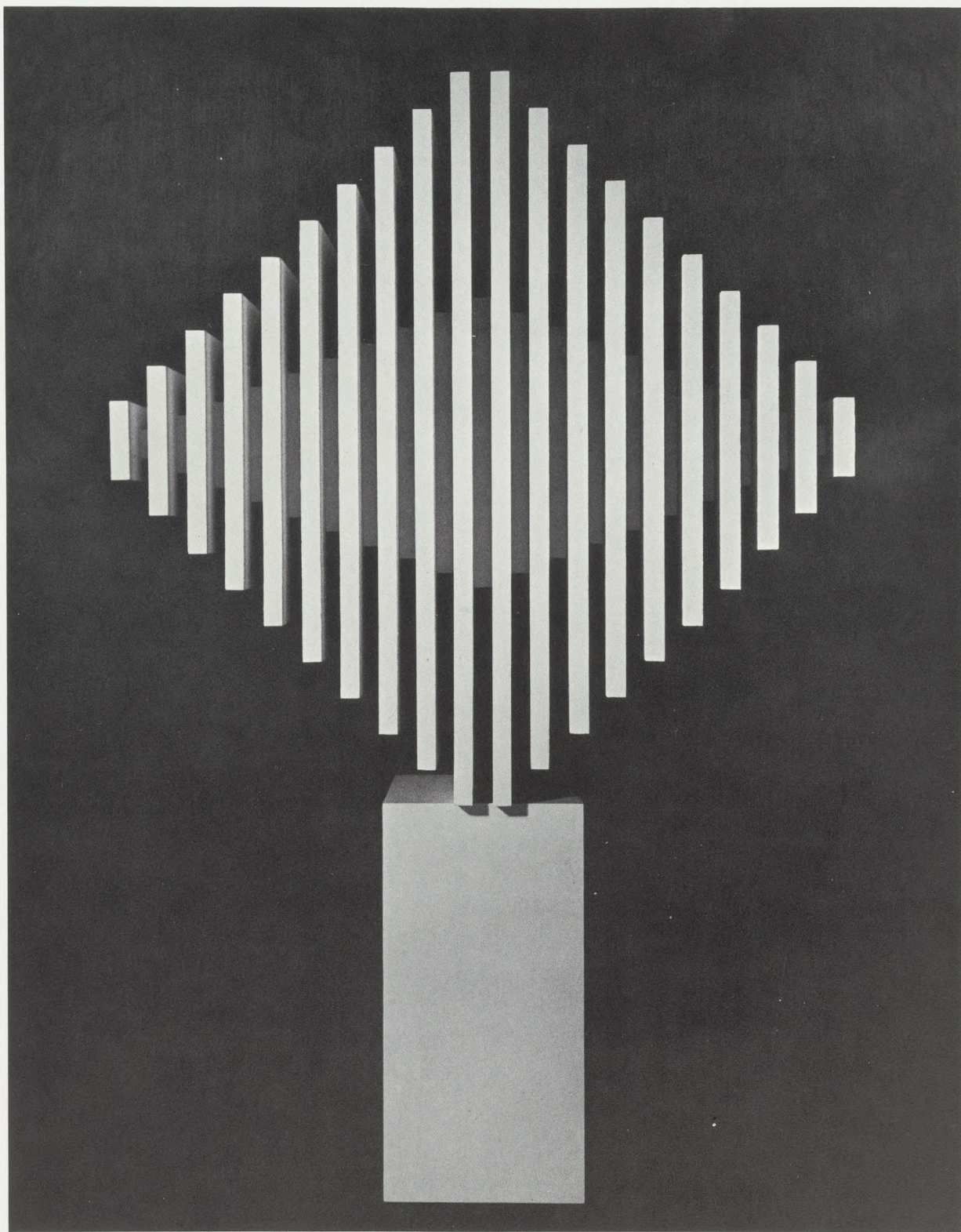
"EK" 1965. White acrylic plastic.

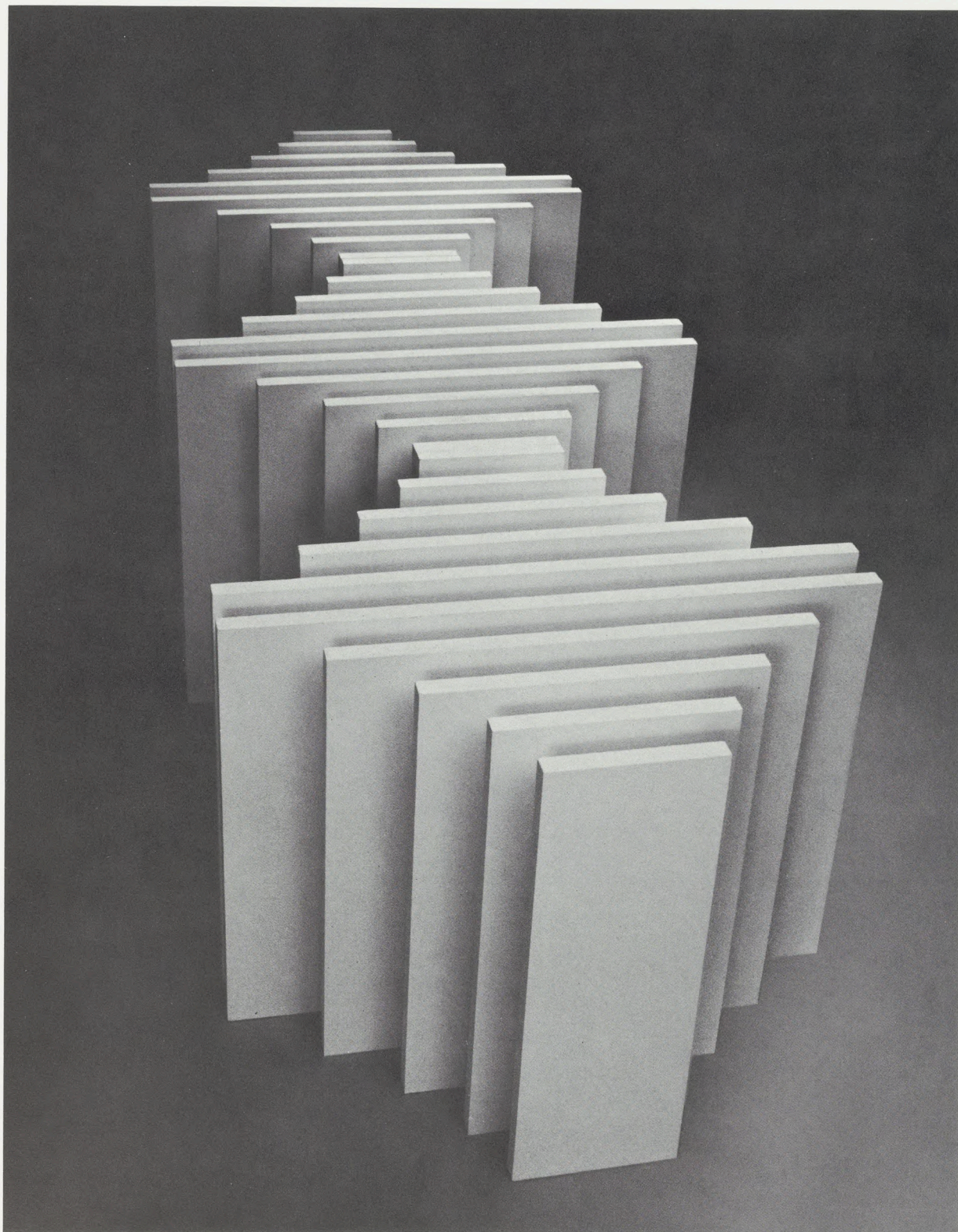


"SKB" 1965. Blue, orange, and light blue acrylic.



"LDC" 1965. Polystyrene.

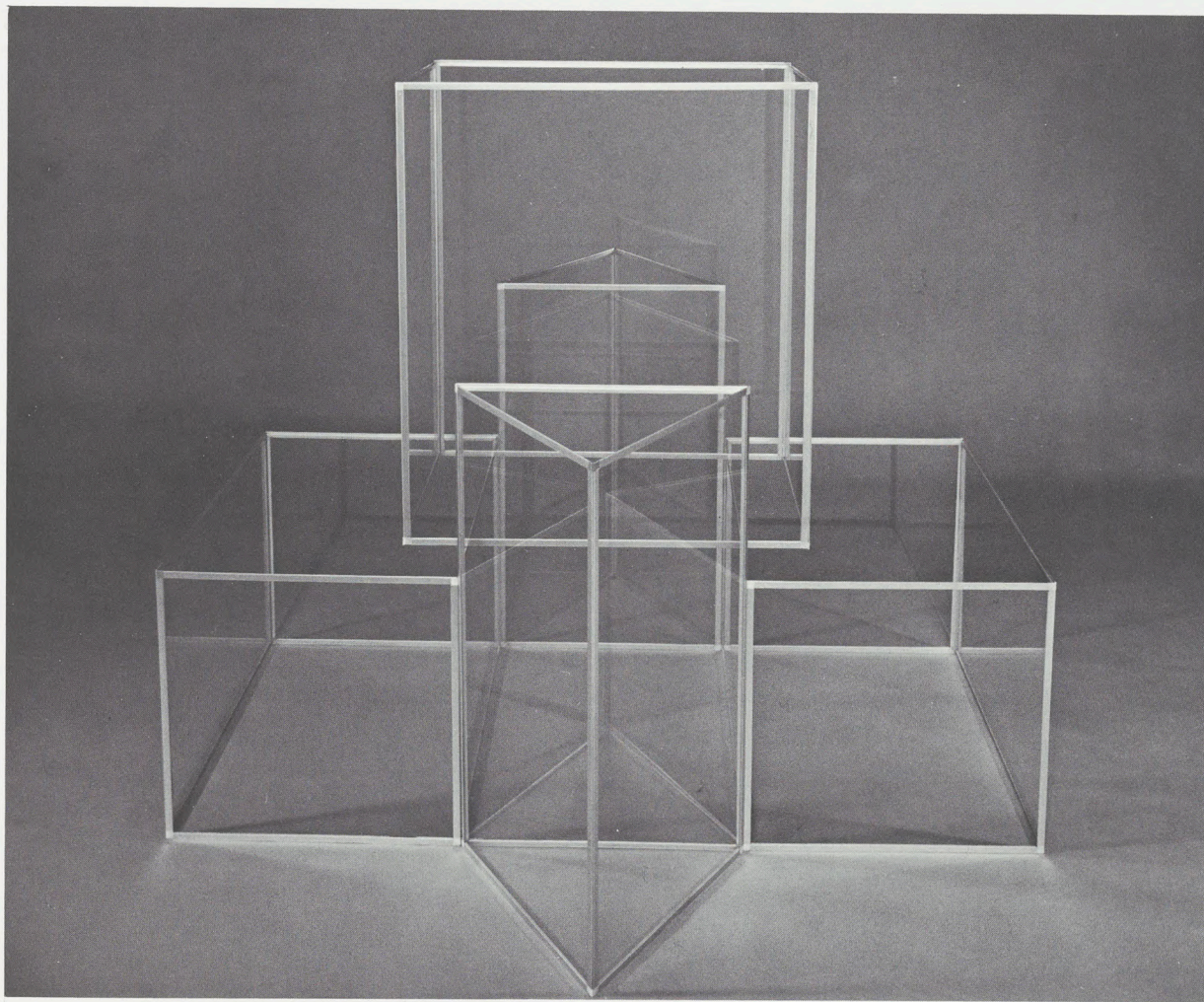




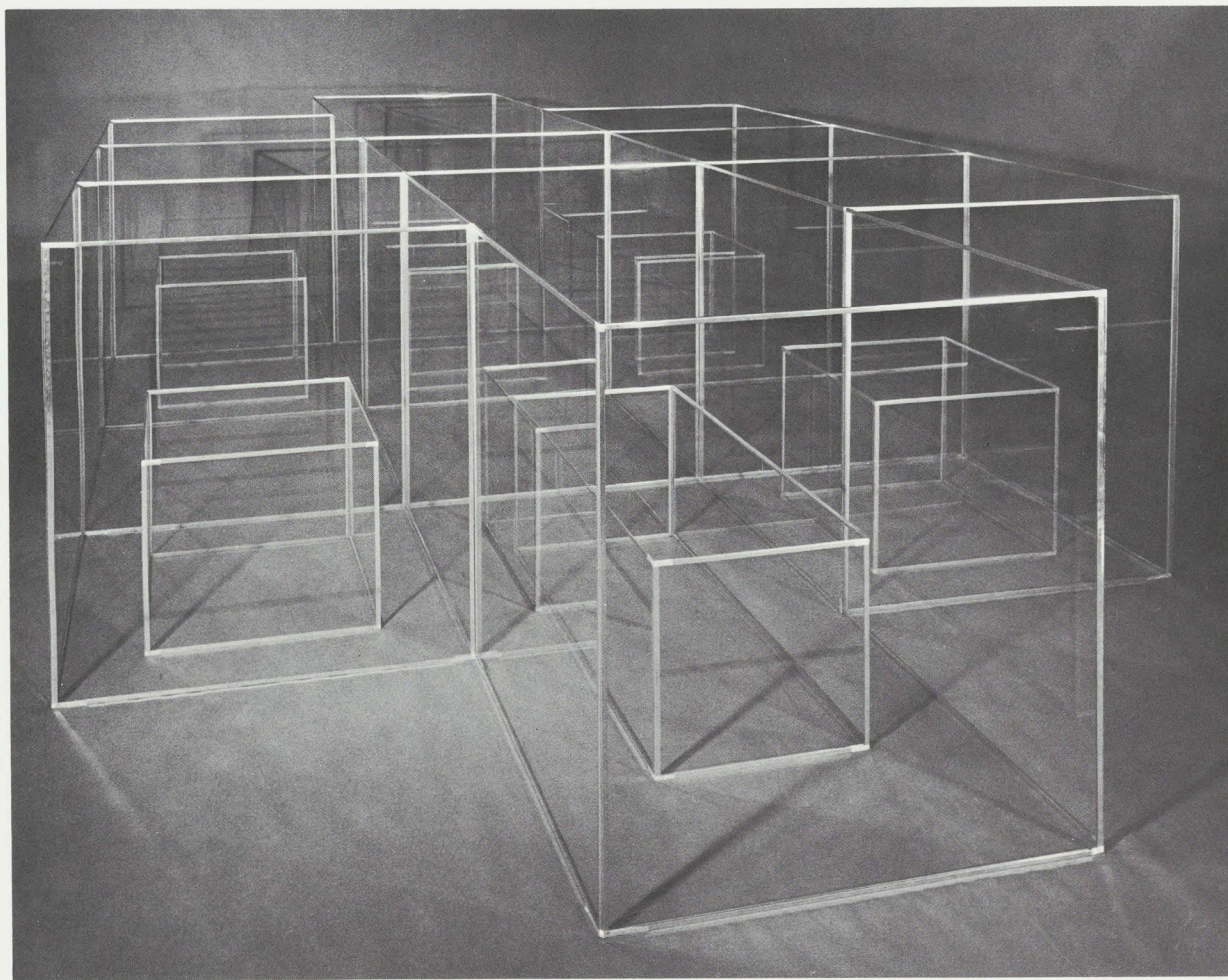
"HMCD" 1966. Polystyrene.



"AGK" 1967. Glass, aluminum.



"Berns" 1967. Glass, aluminum.



"JVD" 1967. Glass, aluminum.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

All dimensions are in inches. Height precedes width and depth.

** Indicates the work is illustrated.*

1. *HG '64*, 1964, Acrylic, 24-13/16 x 16-9/16 x 5-15/16, Robert Crozier, New York
2. *MHG '64*, 1964, Acrylic, 24⁵/₈ x 15¹/₄ x 5¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
3. *JYB*, 1964, Acrylic, 38¹/₄ x 23 x 8⁷/₈, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
4. *JAG*, 1964, Acrylic, 28 x 16 x 7¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
5. *AJG*, 1964, Acrylic, 27 x 17 x 7³/₄, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
6. *BS*, 1965, Acrylic, 18 x 20 x 11, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
7. *MT*, 1965, Acrylic, 30³/₄ x 19¹/₈ x 9¹/₄, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *8. *SKB*, 1965, Acrylic, 36 x 12 x 12, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *9. *EK*, 1965, Acrylic, 34³/₄ x 22 x 9¹/₈, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *10. *LDC*, 1965, Polystyrene, 96 x 34¹/₂ x 36, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *11. *MGG '66*, 1966, Polystyrene, 58 x 58¹/₂ x 24 (90 with base), Bertha Schaefer Gallery
12. *HG '66*, 1966, Polystyrene, 73¹/₂ x 34¹/₂ x 36 (includes base), Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *13. *HMCD*, 1966, Polystyrene, 24 x 32 x 84³/₄, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
14. *Drawing No. 7*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, The Corcoran Gallery of Art
15. *Drawing No. 8*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
16. *Drawing No. 14*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Henri Gallery
17. *Drawing No. 20*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
18. *Drawing No. 27*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Henri Gallery
19. *Drawing No. 29*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
20. *Drawing No. 30*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
21. *Drawing No. 33*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Henri Gallery
22. *Drawing No. 36*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
23. *Drawing No. 37*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
24. *Drawing No. 40*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
25. *Drawing No. 42*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
26. *Drawing No. 47*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
27. *Drawing No. 49*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
28. *Drawing No. 51*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
29. *Drawing No. 633*, 19⁵/₈ x 25¹/₂, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
30. *TST*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 43⁵/₈ x 32¹/₂ x 105³/₈, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
31. *KS*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 32¹/₂ x 77¹/₄ x 129⁵/₈, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *32. *AGK*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 48 x 72¹/₂ x 72¹/₄, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
33. *AB*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 97⁷/₈ x 29-3/16 x 29-3/16, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *34. *JVD*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 45 x 125¹/₄ x 208, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
35. *KC*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 36¹/₂ x 98 x 86, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
36. *EMG*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 40¹/₂ x 49 x 49, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
37. *LM*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 48¹/₂ x 54 x 82, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- *38. *Berns*, 1967, Glass and aluminum, 51¹/₄ x 61⁵/₈ x 65³/₄, Bertha Schaefer Gallery

All drawings were done between 1964-1968.

Biography

Colin Greenly was born in London, England, in 1928. He studied at Harvard College, receiving his A.B. in 1948, at Columbia University School of Painting and Sculpture, 1951-53, and at the American University Graduate School of Fine Arts, 1956. He is represented nationally by the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in New York. In Washington, D. C. he is represented by the Henri Gallery.

He has received one-man exhibitions at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in 1964 and 1966 and at the Jefferson Place Gallery in Washington, D. C. in 1958, 1960, 1963, and 1965.

For his entry, "Wishbone House," 1967, Greenly was named winner of the National Competition for Playground Sculpture sponsored by The Corcoran Gallery of Art under a matched fund grant of the National Endowment of the Arts and Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Zlotnick of Washington.

Greenly also received one of the fourteen Visual Arts Awards given to individual artists by the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities in 1967.

Group exhibitions include: The Des Moines Art Center, "Selected Artists," 1967; The Westmoreland County Museum, Pennsylvania, "Current Trends in American Art," 1966; Eleanor Rigelhaupt Gallery, Boston, "Black and White," 1965; The DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts, "White on White," 1965; Institute of Contemporary Arts, Washington, D. C., "Art in Washington," 1965; The Daniels Gallery, New York, "Plastics," 1965; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, "Young American Printmakers," 1953.

Commissions include: a cast aluminum sculpture relief for The Langley School, McLean, Virginia; two cast iron sculpture reliefs for headquarters of Experiment for International Living, Putney, Vermont; and two playground sculptures entitled "Wishbone House" for Washington, D. C. playgrounds.

Public Collections: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; The Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; The Manufacturers and Traders Trust Co. of Buffalo, New York; The Virginia National Bank of Norfolk; and The Des Moines Art Center.

Photography Credits

We are indebted to Mr. Victor Amato for Photo No. 1 in the catalogue and to McLean Photographers for Photos No. 2-8.

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